

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 03538 091512Z
ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5639

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 3538

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TO THE DEPUTY SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR CASTRO

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS SHUM, AR
SUBJECT ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: STATE 114913

1. I APPLAUD THE DEPARTMENT FOR A POSITIVE AND
MOST TIMELY INITIATIVE IN ITS EFFORT TO BRING
ARGENTINA BACK TO THE RULE OF LAW.

2. IT IS TIMELY BECAUSE THE SUCCESSION ISSUE ITSELF
HAS JUST BEEN SOLVED, IF NOT ALL THE ASSOCIATED
ISSUES. HAD THAT NOT BEEN RESOLVED, AN INITIATIVE
SUCH AS THAT PLANNED WOULD HAVE HAD LITTLE
CHANCE. WE DO NOT SEE THE WORLD CUP GAMES AS A DEVELOPMENT
THAT WILL TOTALLY DISTRACT THE ATTENTION OF THE LEADERSHIP.
IT IS NOT A DIVISIVE ISSUE, RATHER ONE ON WHICH THEY
CAN GENERALLY AGREE. THE LEADERSHIP IS UNLIKELY TO MAKE
SIGNIFICANT CHANGES BEFORE THE GAMES ARE OVER, BUT
THE END OF THE GAMES (ASSUMING THEY ARE NOT MARRED
BY MAJOR EMBARRASMENTS) COULD PROVIDE AN UNUSUALLY
OPPORTUNE TIME FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE CHANGES.
THIS BEING THE CASE, THE MISSION MIGHT VISIT ANY TIME UP
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TO JUNE 15.

3. SUCCESSION TO THE PRESIDENCY IS NO LONGER AN
ISSUE. VIDELA WILL CONTINUE AT THE HELM, BUT HE WILL
NO BE COMMANDER OF THE ARMY AFTER JULY 31.
VIDELAS REPLACEMENT AS ARMY COMMANDER IN THE JUNTA
IS VERY MUCH AT ISSUE. THIS IS THE "KEY" SPOT AND

LIKEWISE THE POWER BASE. GENERAL VIOLA IS VIDELAS ALTER EGO. VIDELA TOLD ME RECENTLY "WHEN YOU TALK TO VIOLA YOU ARE TALKING TO ME". VIDELA ENCOURAGED ME TO CONFER WITH VIOLA WHEN A MESSAGE HAD TO GET TO HIM, THUS BY-PASSING THE FONOFF. IF VIOLA MAKES IT, THE INITIATIVES CHANCES FOR SUCCESS ARE FAVORABLE. THE CONVERSE HOLDS TRUE IF HARDLINERS SUAREZ MASON OR MENENDEZ MAKE IT. THE ARMY'S OK IS A "MUST" FOR ANY SUCCESSFUL GOA COMMITMENT.

4. IN GAMBLING PARLANCE, THE INITIATIVE IS A "LONG SHOT". I SUPPORT IT FULLY, RECOGNIZING ITS PITFALLS. CHEST THUMPING IS A DAILY RITUAL AT THE CASA ROSADA AND AT MILITARY GARRISONS OVER GOA'S SOVEREIGNTY. TO EVERY ARGENTINE, EXTERMINATION OF TERRORISM IS AN INTERNAL MATTER. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT GOA IS WILLING TO SWAP SPARE PARTS OR TRAINING FOR WHAT THEY CONSIDER "HYPOCRITICALLY" AN INFRINGEMENT OF THEIR RIGHT TO FIGHT MARXISM AND SUBVERSION. ON THE OTHER HAND, GOA'S IMAGE ABROAD IS A VITAL CONCERN. US WILLINGNESS TO SELL, TRANSFER OR GRANT SPARE PARTS AND OTHER MATERIEL WOULD BE SEEN A SIGNIFICANT FIRST STEP IN RESTORING THEIR IMAGE AMONG THE FAMILY OF NATIONS. WE CANNOT SELL THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL QUIRK SHORT. MY CONCERN CENTERS OVER THE SENDING OF A
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MISSION HERE WITHOUT ANY ADVANCE SPADE WORK BEING DONE. IT WOULD BE A CLEAR SETBACK, IF ON THE MISSIONS ARRIVAL THE GOA WOULD TAKE A NEGATIVE OR HOSTILE STANCE. THIS COULD OCCUR IF VIDELA, VIOLA, AND HARGUINDEGUY FELT THEY WERE BEING TAKEN UNAWARE AND THAT THEIR HANDS WERE BEING FORCED.

5. I PROPOSE THAT I BE AUTHORIZED TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING APPROACH TO GENERAL VIOLA, STATING THAT THE SECRETARIES OF STATE AND DEFENSE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE DETERIORATION OF OUR RELATIONS AND WOULD HOPE TO SEND A HIGH-LEVEL MISSION TO BUENOS AIRES TO CONSULT AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL TO SEE IF THIS TREND MIGHT BE ARRESTED. RECOGNIZING THAT US LAW PROHIBITS SALES OF EXPORTS OR TRAINING AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT AFTER SEPT 30 AND THAT EVENTS IN ARGENTINA HAVE NOT CHANGED ENOUGH TO CONVINCE OUR CONGRESS THAT THIS LEGISLATION SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN, WE WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE SERIOUSLY TO SEE HOW IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO REVERSE THIS TREND. IF THE SECURITY OPERATION PRACTICES IN ARGENTINA CHANGE IN SOME MAJOR RESPECT IN THE NEAR FUTURE

(WE HAVE HAVE PARTICULARLY IN MIND THE NORMALIZATION OF ARREST PROCEDURES IN CASES OF SUSPECTED SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY), THE USG WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO ACKNOWLEDGE THIS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND TO AUTHORIZE SOME SALES OR LICENSES AS AN INDICATION OF PROGRESS TOWARD NORMAL RELATIONS. IF THE GOA WOULD BE WILLING TO RECEIVE A HIGH LEVEL USG MISSION TO EXPLORE THIS SUBJECT, WE WILL RESPOND PROMPTLY.

6. GENERAL VIOLA IS MY DIRECT CHANNEL TO PRESIDENT VIDELA. THE MESSAGE IN PARA 5 COULD BE PASSED TO VIDELA PROMPTLY, AND WE SHOULD GET A RESPONSIBLE REPLY. IF HE THINKS HE CAN DELIVER, AND WANTS TO, HE WILL INVITE THE MISSION. IF HE
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FEELS IT COULD BLOW UP OR COULD NOT DELIVER, WE WILL GET A LUKEWARM OR NEGATIVE SIGNAL. I FIRMLY BELIEVE IT IS WORTH A TRY.
CASTRO

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